

VZCZCXRO0292
PP RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHUJA #1659/01 2150859
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 030859Z AUG 07 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0475
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 0496
RUEHCD/AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ 0491
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 7539
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001659

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DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIANS FAVOR DEMOCRATIC, UNIFIED NATION

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1. SUMMARY. A vast majority (82 percent) of Nigerians prefer democratic rule over military or religious rule and 74 percent want Nigeria to remain unified. However, Nigerians almost unanimously agree that the government is not doing enough for the people of the Delta and almost half are not satisfied with the performance of the oil companies. Job creation, water and electricity are the top three priorities for the new administration to address over the coming year according to respondents in a first ever country-specific scientific opinion poll conducted in Nigeria by the Nigerian Opinion Polling Firm (NOI) and Gallop Polls. The poll provides a useful insight into the opinions of the more than 140 million Nigerians, but most important will be whether the GON takes these opinions to heart. END SUMMARY.

RESULTS

2. The poll results were encouraging for Nigeria's democratic future with 82 percent of Nigerians opting for democratic rule over military or religious government and 74 percent preferring Nigeria remain united rather than separate. Interestingly, the NOI/Gallup poll discovered that younger Nigerians tend to support democracy slightly more than older generations. The level of support for democracy in the 19-29 age bracket was 81 percent while only 79 percent of the over 46 age bracket support democracy. This demonstrates that government and civil leadership should focus on the younger generations to produce effective custodians of democracy for the future.

3. Looking at Nigeria's confidence in government showed that people generally felt the state government was most trustworthy, while the national government was least so. This may seem surprising considering the numerous reports of corruption at the state and local level. However, according to Dr. Robert D. Tortora, Principal Scientist with the Gallup Organization, this is the result in many countries due to the fact that people generally feel distanced from national government and closer to their local government. Within the national government, Nigerians have the greatest confidence in the National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration (NAFDAC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

14. On the Niger Delta, 92 percent of Nigerians believed the government is not doing enough for the people of the Delta and 46 percent were not satisfied with the performance of the oil companies in the Delta. (COMMENT: This difference in public opinion leaves potential room for oil companies, sharing relative public favor, to positively influence Delta policy. END COMMENT.) When asked what to do with government oil revenues, 90 percent called for investment in infrastructure. On what the government should do for the people of the Delta, 33 percent said create jobs for youth. Despite the disappointment with the GON's actions in the Delta, 75 percent of the troubled region still preferred a united country over breaking up into separate nations.

15. Asked about policy priorities, 24 percent of Nigerians felt job creation should be the focus for all levels of government over the next year. Water and electricity followed closely with 17 percent and 14 percent, respectively.

FUTURE NOI POLLS

16. According to Dr. Ngozie Okonjo-Iweala, facilitator of the poll, there will be another poll carried out before the end of 2007 if adequate funds can be raised. There has been significant interest in continuing the polling, especially among the civil society and business communities. Questions on the next poll will follow up on the efforts of the new government and include new topics such as security agencies, rule of law, electoral and judicial processes.

STRUCTURE OF POLL

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17. Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, former Nigerian Finance Minister and current fellow at the Brookings Institution, facilitated the country-specific scientific opinion poll in Nigeria in February 2007. Nigerian Opinion Polling Firm (NOI) and Gallup Polls conducted one thousand face-to-face interviews in four different languages in randomly selected areas. The margin of error is plus or minus 5 percent. Dr. Okonjo-Iweala hopes the creation of NOI and polling such as this will give a voice to the Nigerian people. During the presentation of results, Dr. Okonjo-Iweala emphasized that this survey was not about pushing a political agenda or criticizing the GON, but rather a way to gauge the voice of the 140 million people living in Nigeria. For a more comprehensive summary of the results please visit:
http://www3.brookings.edu/com/events/20070726_noi.pdf. For a complete transcript of the results presentation titled 'Giving People Voice Through Opinion Polling: Lessons from Nigeria' held on July 26 at The Brookings Institution, please visit:
http://www3.brookings.edu/comm/events/20070726_nigeria.pdf.

POLLS ARE USEFUL, BUT GOVERNMENT MUST ACT

18. COMMENT: Polls are a vital instrument of governance in modern democracies and should become a standard in Nigeria. They provide a much-needed outlet for Nigerians to speak their minds. Polling gives Nigerians a voice, but the issue is how to make the Nigerian government listen to what the people are saying and begin addressing the most pertinent issues. END COMMENT.
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